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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2000/NGO/150
31 March 2000

Original: ENGLISH, FRENCH AND SPANISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-sixth session
Item 9 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Joint written statement*/ submitted by Europe-Third World Centre and Women's International Democratic Federation, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, American Association of Jurists, General Arab Women Federation, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, North-South XXI, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Movement of Mothers, Union of Arab Jurists, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, and International Educational Development, International Progress Organization, Movement Against Racism and For Friendship Among Peoples, World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 March 2000]

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*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Result of the embargo and use of depleted uranium weaponry against Iraq

The above-listed non-governmental organizations are deeply concerned by the degradation of the economic, social and sanitary conditions in Iraq as a result of the embargo, and by the effects the contamination caused by the use of depleted uranium weaponry has on the population and the environment in Iraq. For these reasons, they organized a conference on 17 and 18 March 2000 in Geneva, under the title "Iraq: Embargo + Depleted Uranium = Genocide" at which more than 500 persons from different political orientations and professional backgrounds, notably jurists and scientists from around the world participated. We wish to transmit the conclusions of the Conference:

1. The embargo imposed on Iraq since ten years has caused hundreds of thousands of victims among the civilian population by depriving them of the primary means of survival. The successive resignations of responsible officials of the UN humanitarian aid program , and also the findings by UN Specialized Agencies, such as UNICEF, UNESCO. and FAO, have testified to the agony of 22 million Iraqis resulting from the embargo.

2. The indefinite prolongation of the embargo has destroyed the most developed sanitary system of the region, degrading the health conditions of the total population and making access to health services of a large sector of the population impossible.

3. The embargo threatens the future of Iraqi people. The massive destruction of the educational system and the enormous difficulties in daily life, have profoundly damaged the education of many children who can no longer receive even the most elementary education (UNESCO reported that 35% of children are not in school). The embargo is thus sanctioning several generations to come and is undoing the very social fabric so vital to the future of the country.

4. The bombardments of the allied forces in 1991 and those still carried on by the US and Britain against Iraq's civil population have destroyed the economic infrastructure of the most developed in the Middle East and have put back the country by several decades. These continuous bombardments are preventing the production of the most elementary and needed consumer goods. The targets of the daily bombings are the electric power stations to cut all industrial activity, and the water purification plants to make the life of the population unbearable.

5. The transport and communication systems are reduced to minimum because of the lack of vehicles, of spare parts, and of the general destruction of means. The trains are running at only 15% of their capacity. The imposed "No-Flying zones" by the unilateral decision of the United States and its allies are aggravating the already difficult conditions. Thus the transport of all goods, but in particular of food stuffs and drugs in the different provinces, are extremely reduced.

6. The consequences of the military operations carried out by the coalition during the Gulf - War are of extreme gravity, a fact confirmed by laboratories and by international experts. The utilization of new weapons with depleted uranium against Iraq have affected even 200 000 American and British soldiers who handled them, and have caused a high increase of cancer and other ailments, as well as malformations of newborns.

The 700 tons of depleted uranium dropped on the Iraqi population, the 135 000 tons of bombs, and the diverse tests of new military technologies have contaminated Iraq for a very long time to come, with a polluted and highly ionized air and an abnormal and dangerous radioactive land. In developing the notion that this having been a "clean war", the propaganda has in fact dissimulated a culture of death and vulgar short-sighted economic interests.

The conference considers that because of the unlimited embargo, above all due to the power of what oil can buy, Iraq has become a concentration camp where a people, "forgotten" by the mainstream media, is trying to survive and where the most vulnerable die in masses.

Such a destruction of a people, for whatever reasons there may be, is in total contradiction with the United Nations Charter, with the fundamental principles of international law, and with all the conventions and covenants relative to human rights and the right of peoples.

Beyond the implementation of the measures of the embargo whose legitimacy under the Charter itself is contested, the military use of depleted uranium, the continuous bombardments and all unilateral measures taken against Iraq, constitute a flagrant violation of general international law and of humanitarian law.

The conference considers that the observations and the analysis of facts exposed by the testimonies and by the films brought from Iraq by impartial personalities, show that not only is the embargo a violation of human rights, the destruction of the common wealth of the nation and of the civilian population by the ongoing bombardments a crime of war, but there is also an act of genocide by the use of depleted uranium which strikes every Iraqi on Iraqi territory, not for what he did but for what he is - an Iraqi.

The conference calls for an immediate stop to using depleted uranium weapons everywhere in the world.

The Conference calls on the international organizations, the governments of the international community, to explore every path toward ending the embargo and all unilateral sanctions, in particular the path of the International Court of Justice in the Hague to give its advisory opinion on the validity of the Security Council resolutions under the Charter, or the path of the International Commission charged with the establishment of facts in case of violations of humanitarian law (Article 90 of Protocol 1 of 1977 to the 1949 Geneva Conventions).

The above-mentioned NGOs, concerned by the inhuman and genocidal sanctions against Iraq, call on the UN Secretary-General, on the High Commissioner for Human Rights and on the President of the 56th session of the Commission on Human Rights, as well as on the Members of the Security Council, to take steps to lift the embargo, to provide effective aid for the reconstruction of the country, and to open an objective inquiry into the harm caused by the unilateral measures taken and by the depleted uranium, an inquiry whose findings cannot but lead to a compensation to Iraq and pinpointing the responsibility of those who dared make a people the guinea-pigs of military experimentation.